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Letter dated 1 August 2006 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to refer to the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), which expires on 11 August 2006, in accordance with Security Council resolution 1619 (2005) of 11 August 2005.

Since the adoption of resolution 1619 (2005), UNAMI has, under the leadership of my Special Representative for Iraq, Ashraf Jehangir Qazi, continued to make great efforts, as far as circumstances have permitted, to assist the Iraqi people and Government pursuant to Security Council resolution 1546 (2004) of 8 June 2004. In accordance with paragraph 7 (a) of that resolution, UNAMI has endeavoured to play a leading role to help Iraq to meet each benchmark of the political transition process, including by (i) advising and supporting the Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq, as well as the Transitional Government and the Transitional National Assembly of Iraq, with regard to the process of holding elections; and (ii) promoting national dialogue and consensus-building on the drafting of a national constitution by the people of Iraq.

UNAMI has also, in accordance with paragraph 7 (b) of resolution 1546 (2004), endeavoured, from both inside and outside Iraq, to (i) advise the Government of Iraq in the development of effective civil and social services; (ii) contribute to the coordination and delivery of reconstruction, development and humanitarian assistance; (iii) help to promote the protection of human rights, national reconciliation and judicial and legal reform in order to strengthen the rule of law; and (iv) advise the Government of Iraq on initial planning for the eventual conduct of a comprehensive census.

With the certification of the results of the December election on 10 February 2006, the transition timetable set forth in the Transitional Administrative Law and endorsed by the Council in its resolution 1546 (2004) was completed. I am pleased that the United Nations has been able to play an important role in facilitating each milestone of Iraq's political transition, particularly with regard to the two elections, the drafting of the Constitution and the constitutional referendum during the past year. However, despite meeting these benchmarks, Iraq continues to face formidable political, security and economic challenges. While the Government of Iraq has the primary responsibility for addressing these challenges, it will need the continued support of the international community to succeed.

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In this regard, I welcome resolution 1637 (2005) of 11 November 2005, in which the Security Council affirmed that the United Nations should continue to play a leading role in assisting the Iraqi people and Government with further political and economic development. Following the establishment of the new Council of Representatives on 16 March 2006 and the approval by the Council of Representatives of the new Government of Iraq on 20 May 2006, the United Nations remains fully committed, circumstances permitting, to assist the Government of Iraq, at its request. The United Nations is therefore currently engaged in a comprehensive dialogue with the new Government to explore how the United Nations can best continue to fulfil its mandated tasks under resolution 1546 (2004).

With a view to promoting dialogue and consensus towards national reconciliation, my Special Representative and his team are rendering their good offices and providing political facilitation to the new Government, based on the contacts UNAMI has established with a wide spectrum of Iraqi interlocutors. UNAMI is also prepared to provide further constitutional and electoral assistance at the appropriate time. In addition to these priority activities, the United Nations also intends to strengthen its activities in other key areas of its mandate, particularly reconstruction and development, with a focus on capacity-building and donor coordination.

As part of this role, on 16 June 2006, I agreed to the request by the Government of Iraq for the United Nations to provide strong support in developing the International Compact for Iraq. The International Compact is an initiative of the Government of Iraq for a new partnership with the international community. Its purpose is to achieve a National Vision for Iraq which aims to consolidate peace and pursue political, economic and social development over the next five years. The primary focus will be to build a framework for Iraq's economic transformation and integration into the regional and global economy. The Compact will also reflect the interconnectedness of political and security developments with Iraq's recovery, which is a prerequisite for sustainable regional investments. Under the leadership of the co-chairs of the initiative, Deputy Prime Minister, Barham Salih, and my Deputy Secretary-General, Mark Malloch Brown, as well as my Special Representative for Iraq, Ashraf Jehangir Qazi, the United Nations is working closely with the Government and the donor community, including the United Nations Development Programme, other United Nations agencies, and the World Bank, to develop the Compact. On 27 July 2006, the co-chairs issued a joint statement formally launching the Compact.

Over the past 12 months, the security and human rights situation has remained a matter of serious concern. Insurgent, militia and terrorist attacks continued unabated in many parts of Iraq, especially in Baghdad and in the central and western regions. The people of Iraq are also increasingly threatened by sectarian violence. The new Government of Iraq has outlined concrete steps required for the improvement of the security situation and is progressively trying to address human rights challenges in a more transparent manner. The announcement of a national reconciliation plan by the Prime Minister on 25 June provided a sign of political will needed to confront crucial human rights problems. UNAMI looks forward to its continuing engagement with Iraqi ministries, judicial institutions and civil society organizations to support the establishment of a strong national human rights protection system.

Despite severe operational and security constraints, UNAMI has further grown in size and has expanded its activities beyond Baghdad. However, in the light of the prevailing security situation which remains a matter of great concern, "as circumstances permit" will remain the defining operating principle for all United Nations activities in Iraq for the foreseeable future. There are a total of 396 international civilian and military personnel in Iraq, including up to 300 in Baghdad, 74 in Erbil and 22 in Basra. Progress has been made on the development of an integrated long-term United Nations complex in Iraq and new premises in Erbil and Basra have now been completed.

The continued close cooperation with the Government of Iraq and the continued active support of the Security Council and the international community will be essential for enabling UNAMI to fully implement its mandated tasks. A comprehensive update on UNAMI's activities in Iraq will be provided in my next quarterly report to the Security Council, which is due by 7 September 2006.

In the light of the foregoing, I wish to recommend that the Security Council extend the mandate of UNAMI pursuant to resolution 1546 (2004) for a further period of 12 months, with the intention of reviewing the mandate at the end of that period, or sooner, if so requested by the Government of Iraq.

I should be grateful if you would bring the present letter to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Kofi A. **Annan**